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ABSTRACT

This activity packet addresses technology in the classroom, specifically using the Internet. It presents three activities that use the Internet as a resource: (1) "Whose Point of View" (the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese control); (2) "Where to Look" (an earthquake in Afghanistan); and (3) "Research Project: The Pros and Cons of Free Trade." Each activity lists student objectives, materials needed, and procedures. Includes two worksheets. (BT)

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Technology in the Classroom

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Grade Levels 9 - 12

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The American Forum for Global Education
120 Wall Street, Suite 2600
New York, NY 10005

www.globaled.org

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The Internet can be a valuable resource in giving teachers and students a global perspective. It can bring experiences of other cultures vividly into the classroom. The possibilities are potentially endless. The three activities included here introduce using the Internet as a primary source for research.

Technology in the Classroom

A Global Perspective on Virtual Reality

Do terms like virtual reality, cyberspace, the Internet, web pages and servers cause your eyes to glaze over and your minds to freeze? Are you afraid that you will never quite catch hold of the tiger called technology? Do you feel like you're living in thc age of the quill while your colleagues are already planning their millennium celebrations online? Don't panic! You have lots of company.

Although it would be difficult to substantiate, it seems that there is more talk about the educational use of technology than actual practice. Certainly this is true in many American classrooms. Despite the fact that at least a decade has passed since the first computers were introduced into schools, the progress has been slow, especially in the humanities. Let's look at technology -- the good, the bad and the ugly.

The Good

Technology is especially appropriate for the enhancement of global studies. It can bring experiences of other cultures vividly into the classroom. Not only does telecommunications allow for interaction between students, it also encourages creative opportunities to be formed by showing the interrelationships among the social studies, literature, art and music. Multimedia classrooms help students move away from "chalk and talk" classrooms to more engaging and motivating processes which encourage higher order thinking. Teachers can have access to seemingly unlimited resources through the Internet, CD ROMS and videos. Both students and teachers can examine issues from multiple points of view and can learn how to deal with primary source documents. The possibilities are potentially endless and definitely exhausting.

The Bad and The Ugly

So what's the problem? Why aren't our classrooms cruising along the information superhighway more rapidly? The potential benefits from the use of interactive technology are largely unrealized in social studies education (Betts, 1994)1. Furthermore, Ehman and Glenn (1991)2 found, "There is a low use of interactive technology in social studies classrooms and a very thin knowledge base from research about this use." Why is the use of telecommunications still relatively restricted in thousands of classrooms throughout the United States?

Successful integration of technology depends upon four factors: First there are the issues of **access and availability**. Who gets to use the computers? Do the computer labs (if they exist) "belong" to one department? And finally, is there sufficient equipment for a teacher to use with a class of students? After all, trying to teach students to use information technology and techniques without an adequate number of computer stations and lines is like trying to teach someone to swim on top of the kitchen table.

Don't jump to the conclusion that full implementation is simply a matter of buying and installing more computers and telephone access lines. A second obstacle is **user literacy**. Are a significant number of faculty members trained to use this equipment appropriately and effectively? We have all visited schools where classrooms filled with expensive, "state of the art" technology are utilized only one or two periods a day because there is only one teacher who has been trained to use the equipment.

Another roadblock to widespread implementation stems from the lack of **technical support**. All too often, budget is allocated for the acquisition and installation of technology, but not for the necessary repairs and maintenance. Without appropriate technical support, good equipment is often relegated to the junk heap because it can't be fixed or upgraded.

Experiences with teachers have shown us that the real obstacle to implementation results from questions related to **functionality**. Teachers want to know if the technology serves any real purpose or is it just a "gimmick." Some educators still suspect that computers are being brought in to replace teachers. Others feel that searching the Internet is too time consuming and frequently yields little useful information.

These are all legitimate concerns. Careful planning and ongoing professional development are essential elements in any attempt to bring about systemic reform.

Following are three activities to use in your classrooms using the Internet as a resource.

Activity #1: Point of View?

Activity #2: Where to Look?

Activity #3: Research Project: Pros and Cons of Free Trade

1 Betts, Frank M. (1994). The Status of Social Education. ASCD. 6.7-6.9.
2 Ehman, L.H., and A.D. Glenn. "Interactive Technology in Social Studies." In Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching or Learning, edited by J. Shaver. New York: MacMillan.

Activity #1

Whose Point of View?

Introduction

The Internet can be a valuable resource in giving students multiple perspectives. The example used in this activity deals with the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese control; however you may choose to use any current news item. For example: the status of the Eurodollar, the plight of refugees in Africa or recent elections in another country.

Student Objectives

- to understand the value of the Internet as a reference source;
- to practice research techniques;
- to compile a list of global news resources; and
- to compare and contrast primary sources.

Materials

Students must have online access. Ideally, this lesson will take place in a classroom, but if no computers exist in the classroom, small groups of students may be sent to the library or media center to complete this activity and then return to the classroom for debriefing.

Procedure

Remind the students about June 30, 1997-- the date that Great Britain returned the colony of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. Ask students to explain the significance of this date for citizens of the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong. Discuss the reasons for the return of Hong Kong. Does the return mean the same thing to a resident of Hong Kong as it does to a citizen of the People's Republic of China? What might this changeover mean to a British subject?

Ask students how they could research the various points of view regarding this historic event. Brainstorm sources of information (newspapers, journals, live interviews etc.). How can technology give us access to the information that we need?

Divide the class into work groups and assign the following to each group:

- Locate the following web address: http://ruby.cqu.edu.au/index.htm (This site will lead to an index of worldwide newspapers.)
- Find three different news accounts of the changeover: one from a Hong Kong newspaper; one from a People' s Republic of China newspaper; and one from a third country.
- Print out the three news reports and read each. Complete Worksheet #1.

After each group has completed its task, reconvene full group and debrief findings. Discuss and analyze differing points of view.

Summary

The advantages of using the Internet to conduct this type of research are obvious. However, one must always be particularly careful when using primary sources. What are some of the pitfalls of relying on only primary sources for research? How can you minimize these risks?

Worksheet #1

SOURCE #1	SUMMARY OF NEWS STORY	POINT OF VIEW

SOURCE #2	SUMMARY OF NEWS STORY	POINT OF VIEW

SOURCE #3	SUMMARY OF NEWS STORY	POINT OF VIEW

Activity #2

Where to Look?

Introduction

There's a lot of information out there on the Internet. The trick is knowing how to find it quickly and efficiently. This activity is designed to acquaint students with some of the different search engines and to teach them about research techniques. The example that we are using in this activity was selected following an earthquake in Afghanistan. Teachers may select any appropriate topic.

Student Objectives

- to utilize three different search engines
- to compare and contrast the results of each search

Materials

Same as in Activity #1. Students must have on-line access. Ideally, this lesson will take place in a classroom, but if no computers exist in the classroom, small groups of students may be sent to the library or media center to complete this activity and then return to the classroom for debriefing.

Procedure

Divide the class into work groups and tell each group to find information on the earthquake in Afghanistan. What happens when you use the keyword: *earthquake*? What happens when you use the keywords: *Afghanistan earthquake*? What other keywords could you use?

Complete Worksheet #2. To give students a guide, we have filled out the first response using Yahoo. Their task is to conduct the same kind of search using two other search engines.

Worksheet #2

Directions

Select two search engines, other than **Yahoo**. For example, you might choose **AltaVista** (very large and very fast) or **Lycos** (also large, but contains only summaries of the pages it indexes, not the full text) or **Infoseek** or **OpenText**. For each, look up information about the earthquake in Afganistan first using the keyword *earthquake* and then using the keywords *Afganistan earthquake*. Record your findings in the chart below. To help you, we have done the first one using Yahoo.

NAME OF SEARCH ENGINE	KEYWORD	SITE MATCHES
Yahoo	earthquake	234
Yahoo	Afganistan earthquake	14
.	.	.
.	.	.
.	.	.
.	.	.

Which of the searches produced results that were most useful to you? Explain.

What advice would you give a classmate about finding information on the Internet?

Activity #3

Research Project: The Pros and Cons of Free Trade

Introduction

The Internet gives students and teachers access to an enormous volume of information. Because of the broad range of resources available, students can gather materials which represent multiple perspectives and then analyze and debate significant global issues. This activity can be used in an economics class or in a global studies class.

Student Objectives

- to gather information to assist in completing project;
- to interpret and analyze the information; and
- to evaluate the information for accuracy.

Procedure

Place the following statement on the chalkboard. Ask students what this statement means to them. Discuss.

> "More wealth will be created in 1997 than in any previous year in history and, since the rate of population growth is coming down, this new wealth will go further." **The Economist**

Briefly review the fundamental concepts of free trade and free markets. Some of the questions we want to be able to answer are as follows:

- What policies should the United States promote to support the concepts of free trade?
- What are the benefits of these policies?
- Who will prosper?
- What are the disadvantages of tree trade? Who will lose?
- To what extent, if any, should American workers be protected?
- What is the role of the government?

Working in groups, students will identify a topic that they would be interested in researching. It may be a topic based on one of the questions listed above, or it may be on a related subject. For example, the group might want to look at child labor laws around the world and see if there are connections between the economic system and protections. Or students may want to compare the "safety nets" for children in industrialized nations.

Each group will be responsible to produce a written presentation designed to inform classmates about their findings. The format of the presentation may include overhead transparencies, handouts and computer-generated graphs and/or charts. Information technology must be used to assist in gathering, organizing and presenting the information.

Enrichment

Students might research the responses to technology through the ages. This topic could form the basis of an extended interdisciplinary unit which may include literary works (e.g., Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells, Karel Capek, Jules Verne and Mary Shelley); paintings and music.